

An Inside Job Galatians 5:1 – 6:10

Stories about insider trading are all over the news right now. In fact, Martha Stewart is sitting in jail right now. The stock exchange considers it illegal for people to make trades on stock when they know information that only those within the company should know. I have heard stories about great robberies that people say went so well they must have been an inside job. Sometimes people from a company actually help to rob it and they have an advantage, because they know everything they need to know and can work from within to accomplish something that ordinary people could not do.

Today I am going to talk to you about a different kind of inside job. One that can bring the overthrow of an oppressive government and one that can change lives. The inside job that I am talking about is the one that happens when the Spirit of God comes into your lives. This morning, I am going to talk to you about how it is that we as sinful human beings can come into relationship with God and talk about the change that should result because of that relationship.

The first part of this chapter starts off by talking about some strange stuff; talking about slavery, circumcision and justification by the law. You might be thinking what is all this and how is it significant to me. Well Christianity has its basis in the Jewish faith and to truly understand our relationship with God, or how we can have a relationship with God, we need to understand how God began and continued His relationship with the nation of Israel.

About 4,000 years ago God approached a man named Abram. God made a covenant with Abram and promised Him “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great and you will be a blessing I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through you.” Abram didn’t actually have his first kid until he was 99 years old. At that time, God changed Abram’s name to Abraham, which means father of many. God then told Abraham that He would confirm His covenant with Abraham. God promised to be Abraham’s God and the God of all His descendants. As a sign of this covenant, Abraham and all his children and even people who worked for him needed to be circumcised, which is a tradition that Jewish people still continue today. This showed the beginning of God working with a particular people, Israel.

Much later the descendant of Abraham had reached about a million and had actually become slaves in Egypt, God rescued His people, even though they had not stayed true to their end of the covenant. Afterwards, God brought them to Mt Sinai, and gave them the law. He told them how they should live. He gave the Ten Commandments as well as many other commands to follow. Over and over God demonstrated His faithfulness to the people of Israel, a people He had covenanted to bless, way back with Abram.

You may be asking yourself, “well that’s a nice story, but what does it have to do with me?” It has a lot actually. At the time of this writing, there were a lot of Jewish

Christians that were trying to say that if you want to be a Christian, then you need to follow all of the Jewish customs. You need to be circumcised and you need to follow all the laws that God gave his people.

Paul's whole argument to them revolves around the fact that God's covenant relationship with His people started even before these signs were instituted. The laws even though they were meant to be followed, couldn't save you by following them. It's funny when you think about it that the issues may be a little different to day, but people are still struggling with the same things. They are depending on outside things to save them.

Some people put their trust in what they do. They say "I go to church every Sunday and I am basically a good person and think therefore everything is alright with me. What most people don't realize that it isn't about all the external things, it is not about what you do. To be in relationship with God, takes Him first approaching us and it is in effect an inside job. With Israel, God was the one who initiated the relationship. God made the covenant even before Israel could do anything in response. The signs of circumcision and the obedience to the law was a response to God's grace.

The same is true of us today. Although many people put their hope on the external things, the reality is that our hope comes from God. In Ephesians 2:8 it says, "⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast." It is by grace, which means that it is a gift from God, something we don't deserve. It comes through faith, hope in Jesus, whose sacrifice, paid for all our sins and made us right in God. Much like the Israelites, this relationship is initiated by God. In fact, in Galatians 2:24 as Paul is building his argument he says that, "²⁶You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Here we find that through Christ, we are actually included in that original promise to Abraham. We are actually part of His family. The God who worked with a particular people in the Old Testament is now actually our God to. What an amazing thing! This relationship is not based on our obedience to the law or the outward signs that we do, it is based upon the work of God in us.

Some people would say that if this is really of grace then it doesn't really matter what I do. Paul seems to be arguing differently here. He is trying to tell us that if we really understand who we are, then it should make a difference in our lives. He says that we were called to be free. This means that we are free from the burden to earn our own salvation. But it also means much more. At one time we were not God's people. We were not His children, but if we believe in Christ then now we are.

Paul here is encouraging us to live like we are the children of God. He says in verse 24 that if we belong to Christ then our sinful nature has been crucified. I am not by any means an English expert. But I did notice something in this passage. He didn't say we

are crucifying, something on going. Paul says it in past tense. “have crucified” This is something that is already done.

Paul is trying to tell us to stop acting like slaves, act the Children of God that you already are. This isn't something we have to do on our own. It is an inside job. It says in Ephesians 1:13, the Spirit of God comes to live in us the minute we believe. What a powerful truth. This is emphasized in Colossians, when it talks about Christ in us the hope of glory. To look like Christ, means following or keeping in step with the Spirit of God who lives in us.

Unfortunately, many of us don't fully realize who we are. I see pastors abusing children, church leaders, church leaders committing adultery, I see church members gossiping about each other and some times people treated worse in a church than they would be anywhere else. I see people in the church who struggle with alcohol, struggle with lust and pornography, who are angry, bitter and many other things.

Many Christians are living defeated lives and failing to realize the power of the risen Christ within them. Neil Anderson wrote a book called “Victory Over the Darkness” a book that has been life transforming for me. In it, he says that the greatest tool of the enemy is the power of the lie. He cannot change who we are and cannot remove the Spirit of God from our lives, but he can fill our minds with lies and keep us from fully realizing our potential. He gets many Christians to believe that they are helpless to resist temptation and are just stuck living fruitless lives as Christians.

However, the reality is that in Christ, we are new creatures. We are no longer slaves to our sinful nature, but are now Children of God. We can and will bear fruit, because the Spirit of God lives in us. As Children of God, filled with His Spirit, we need to keep in Step with the Spirit and allow God to control our lives, instead of taking up again the yoke of slavery that holds us down.

When we notice our lives reflecting, the first list, which is not exhaustive; when we notice ourselves struggling with lust, becoming envious of others, falling into fits of rage or anything else that is sinful, we are not acting like the people we really are. At this point we need to stop and realize that we are not keeping in step with God' Spirit and in fact are not acting like ourselves.

God has a better way for us to live. He desires our lives to be filled with love for one another. He desires for us to have lives filled with joy, peace. He desires for us to be people with patience who are kind to one another and who are gentle and self controlled. If we don't see this in our lives, then we are not keeping in step with the Spirit of God and are not acting consistently with our nature.

On the surface it may seem difficult to be who God made us to be. But we need to realize that it is an inside job. God can and will work within us to bring about the fruit of a Spirit filled life. When we realize we are not as fruitful as we should be, we just need

to stop and surrender to the God who already lives in us and who has already called us his own.

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” God is working in your life right now and He desires for you to live a life that pleases Him. Thankfully, to live this life is actually done through Him and we just need to surrender and allow Him to bear fruit in our lives.

May you realize fully all that God has for you. Lets pray.